

# Tips for Effective Consumer Forum Presentations

The following general guidelines should be helpful in preparing and conducting presentations for the Consumer Outreach Education Forums.

## ***Enjoy Yourself – Have Fun!***

### **Planning the Session**

1. Define your objectives.
  - Decide what you are trying to achieve.
  - Decide why it is important for you to achieve it.
2. Find out who your audience will be.
  - What is their knowledge of the topic?
  - What is their previous experience with the subject matter?
  - What are their needs and expectations?
3. Determine the presentation method and design the appropriate activities.
4. Decide how you will handle questions.
  - During the session?
  - At the end of the session?
5. Decide what reference sources you will provide.
6. Decide what handout (s) you will provide.
7. Plan your notes carefully and provide good cues.
  - Mark your notes with details about exact points for visual changes.
8. Conduct at least a partial run-through of the session with a colleague or co-worker.

## Conducting the Session

1. Create a relaxed atmosphere.
  - Exhibit enthusiasm about the topic (via smile, movements, and gestures).
  - Display a positive sense of humor.
2. Introduce the participants to you and to each other.
  - Small Group – Ask each person to give his/her name, job, and why he/she is attending the session.
  - Large Group – Ask for a show of hands based on certain criteria (e.g., people who have been to a similar session, people who work in the medical field, or people who have even heard of electronic health records).
3. Open with a good introduction designed to capture the group's attention.
4. Outline your objectives for the session.
  - Tell the group what you expect to accomplish in the available time.
  - Specify what you will and will not do.
  - Outline the schedule of events so that the group will know what to expect.
5. Make smooth transitions between parts of the session. These transitions should be highlighted in your notes and might include:
  - Brief overview of the next topic.
  - Review of the agenda (session objectives) between topics.
  - Change of media.
  - Interim summary before a new topic.
  - Activity.
6. Encourage active participation by asking questions.
  - Ask questions of the entire group.
  - Target a question to a specific participant.
  - Use participants' names when asking and answering questions.
  - Provide positive reinforcement when participants respond.
7. Close the session with a brief but powerful summary.
  - Restate what you have tried to achieve in the session.
  - Synthesize the main points made.
  - Discuss plans for follow up, if appropriate.
8. Request feedback from the group.

## Using Slides

1. Don't talk to your slides.
  - Watch the audience for cues to your presentation's acceptance.
2. Let the slides speak for themselves.
  - Allow the audience to read them.
  - Use silence and don't read each slide's content word for word.
  - Pause after highlighting points on a slide.
  - Allow the participants a chance to absorb the information.

## Reducing Session Anxiety

1. Arrive early to make sure that everything is ready before the first participants arrive.
  - Determine how you want to handle possible distractions (e.g., use of cell phones).
  - Decide where your notes will be placed when you are not holding them (e.g., lectern, desk or table).
2. Make sure all of the media equipment is working.
  - Familiarize yourself with all equipment.
  - Make sure backup provisions have been made (in case of failures).
  - Make sure all slides are loaded, arranged, and checked.
  - Make sure the proper microphone is available (e.g., lavalier).
3. Locate and check the lighting and temperature controls.
4. Look over your notes one last time.
5. Greet participants as they enter the room.
  - Shake hands.
  - Welcome them to the session.
  - Chat with as many of them as possible.

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## Sources

The information in this handout is summarized from the following sources:

- *Designing Effective Lectures: Paper #5*  
U.S. Agency for International Development  
JHPIEGO, an affiliate of Johns Hopkins University, 1996
- *Teaching Tips for Effective Lectures* at: [www.uab.edu/uasomume/cdm/lectures.html](http://www.uab.edu/uasomume/cdm/lectures.html)
- *Effective Workshops* at: [www.cfpc.ca/English/](http://www.cfpc.ca/English/)